SEARCHLIGHT

R/V REGINA MARIS

— Ship to Shore News —

SEARCHLIGHT Vol. 9 No. 7 5 April 1984 Hogsty Reef, Bahamas

After a long, hot week of preparation for Expedition 84.2, REGINA lay stern to the pier, Mediterranean style, in the harbor at Puerto Plata. The crew were still busy painting, tarring the rigging, and stowing and lashing extra gear in place, as scientists and students arrived and duffle bags were passed hand to hand from the pier, along the gang plank, over the deck, and down the skylights into the empty bunks below. That evening we made acquaintances and let the new people settle into their home for the next six weeks.

On Friday morning we gave an orientation session, discussed the 'first day book,' and held fire and boat drills. Watches were posted as the mates began instruction on duties ranging from helmsmanship to laying aloft and stowing the square sails. Early in the afternoon, we cast off lines and moved into the harbor to pick up anchor. It took the fire hoses an hour to clean the sticky, foul smelling mud off the anchor cable, but finally we were outward bound, glad to leave Puerto Plata for a while.

The next morning on Silver Bank was beautiful, with clear water and gentle weather. Most of the whale population had begun its northern migration, and only a few cow, calf and escort groups were seen. Those left seemed restless and on the move. We anchored in close to the reef to allow our new students and scientists a chance to explore the reef and the wreck, POLYXENI. For all the time we have spent charting this area, we were surprised to find two new and dangerous shoal coral heads inside what we thought was a safe fareway into the inner anchorage, proving that caution is always required here.

The next morning we moved slowly off the bank to begin our two-day passage to Great Inagua. Our first night was punctuated by an unusual event. As we ghosted along with a light breeze and a calm sea, a routine bilge check indicated that the bilge level had risen to nearly the level of the engine room deck. All available pumps were immediately put into use as everyone turned to with a will. As we opened and checked the hatches we found the #1 head discharge had come off the sea cock, and we had our own 'artesian well' under the foc'sle. Once this was refitted, the bilge quickly returned to normal. We were once again reminded that at sea one must always pay attention and take nothing for granted.

The next day was calm, allowing students to practice using the gear required for collecting ocean station data. During the Neuston tow, the tow line parted, giving us the opportunity for a man overboard drill. Even in this calm sea, everyone was impressed by how soon we lost sight of the three small orange floats that support the net in the ten minutes required to resight the net and retrieve it.

Early Monday morning we checked into the Bahamas at Matthewtown. After clearing customs we had a half day to see the town before our evening departure for Hogsty Reef, 45 miles to the north. An easy overnight sail had us at anchor before breakfast the next morning. Boats were launched, gear deployed, and the quest for scientific data began in earnest. Gretchen Sauer and Tiger Bronson began studying the daily behavior patterns of the sooty tern population, which built up each morning to a peak at about 160 birds by noon. By 1500 hours each day the birds had dispersed, presumably to fly out to sea to feed at night. Gretchen and Tiger also kept a record of all the land birds they saw on the cay, which included many species from the West Indies and North America. During a day when a low pressure system moved across the reef, large numbers of herons, egrets, warblers, humming birds, and ospreys were soon, probably migrating to the U.S. or Canada.

Mark Helfant used a stationary Neuston net in the currents running from the reef to catch larval fish. Tows, particularly at night, caught a great variety of larval reef fish and, surprisingly, a few deep water fish as well.

Five students looked at different aspects of the organisms associated with 12 large coral heads. Leslie Endacott looked at schooling fish; Holly Hubner identified individual species of corals; Beth Grieff did the same for species of algae. Bob Porter identified all the individual groupers on each coral head, while Melissa Balbach identified the fish species using each head. Since the coral heads varied in size from about 5 square meters to 365 square meters, the students attempted to relate differences in the numbers and kinds of species to coral head size.

Later, at Mira por Vos, South Cay, the scientific party walked the beaches looking for remains of marine mammals without success, but found a salt water tidal lake in the center of South Cay filled with millions of pup or killifish and a hundred or so small scarlet red shrimp. The shrimp could not be identified from available reference material aboard REGINA--identification will have to await our return. Their color made them brightly visible along the edge of the lake and their small eyes made us wonder how they could avoid being eaten by the pugnacious killifish or the numerous herons and egrets in the lake.

Diana Bank rises to 7-20 fathoms out of 1500 fathoms of water. As we passed over the 1000 fathom curve, many seabirds--brown boobies, sooty terns, Audubon shearwaters, and frigate birds--were feeding over tuna, dolphin fish, and wahoo which were in turn feeding on flying fish and other bait. The area's apparent productivity was indicated by plankton tows.

Respectfully submitted,

Evan Logan, Master
Dr. Peter Major
ORV REGINA MARIS

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Member Daysail on REGINA — Saturday, 9 June at 0830; back by 1700

Our spring daysail for members will be held Saturday, June 9. Reservations will be taken over the phone. If you are calling from outside Massachusetts (continental U.S.), use our toll-free line (1-800-447-2022). From Massachusetts, call 283-1475.

One $25 membership is a SINGLE membership, entitling that individual only to one spot on the daysail. A $50 membership is a FAMILY membership entitling four people (immediate family members only) to sail. Children under the age of 16 must be aaccompanied by a parent. Please don't bring toddlers under 5.

1984 Annual Meeting and Party — Saturday, 9 June at 1730
19 Harbor Loop, Gloucester

Come and join us for our Annual Meeting and Party at our newly-expanded headquarters in Gloucester. See our new laboratory facilities and additional office space, and visit aboard REGINA.

George Nichols will introduce new staff members and report on events of the past year and future directions. Peter Major will give a scientific research update. Stuart Goldman, our new Director of Admissions, will talk about student recruitment. Larry Lewis, our new Director of Education, will say a few words on plans for our educational activities.

Again this year we will be holding a raffle, with a grand prize of a voyage on REGINA for two. All members who attend the meeting will receive a free raffle ticket

Please let us know by June 4 if you will be coming.

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